



# NEWS RELEASE

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**Leaders of Utah State Courts and Child Welfare Agencies to Participate in  
National Landmark Meeting to Reform Foster Care System  
Sept. 20 – 23, 2005  
Bloomington, Minnesota**

**Williamsburg, VA** (Sept. 9, 2005) — A contingent from Utah—including state court and child welfare representatives—are participating in an unprecedented national effort to better protect abused and neglected children who are in the court system. Utah's team is joining court leaders and representatives of child welfare agencies from every state, the District of Columbia, and three U.S. territories for *Changing Lives By Changing Systems: National Judicial Leadership Summit for the Protection of Children*, Sept. 20 to 23 in Bloomington, Minnesota.

The Summit will serve as the springboard for a series of actions designed to reform the way abused and neglected children's cases proceed through the courts. One of the Summit's goals is to reduce delays in securing safe, permanent homes for children in foster care. Each state will develop an individual action plan to improve its child protection procedures and programs. Following the Summit, these action plans will be compiled into a National Call to Action for state courts and will launch a collaborative reform plan between the courts and child welfare agencies at state and local levels. More than 40 justices or judges from the states' highest courts are attending the four-day Summit.

In May 2004, the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care issued recommendations that call for improving court oversight of foster care cases to reduce delays in placing children safely and permanently in homes. These recommendations, endorsed by the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) and the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), will serve as the Summit's central themes.

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC), CCJ, COSCA, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges are sponsoring the Summit. Minnesota Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz is co-chairing the event along with Vermont State Court Administrator Lee Suskin. "This nation's abused and neglected children deserve better results from the system designed to protect them," said Chief Justice Blatz. "By bringing the leadership of courts and child and family services to the table, we have a unique opportunity to make meaningful improvements for kids in each and every state.

The Summit is made possible by a \$400,000 grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to the NCSC, which has conducted extensive research on family courts and child protection. Additional support for this project is being provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Fostering Results, and the State Justice Institute.

The Pew Charitable Trusts serves the public interest by providing information, advancing policy solutions and supporting civic life. Based in Philadelphia, with an office in Washington, D.C., the Trusts will invest \$204 million in fiscal year 2006 to provide organizations and citizens with fact-based research and practical solutions for challenging issues. More information about the Trusts can be found at [www.pewtrusts.org](http://www.pewtrusts.org).

The National Center for State Courts, founded in 1971 by United States Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the administration of justice and provides leadership, research, technology, education, and training to the state courts. NCSC also is taking the lead on several key issues facing the justice system. For example, the National Center is working to improve citizens' participation in the jury system, reform the judicial selection process, and develop a model policy on public access to court records. NCSC is headquartered in Williamsburg, Va., with offices in Arlington, VA, and Denver.

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